



## **MSDE BULLETIN**

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#### **MARYLAND PRINCIPALS LINK WITH EDUCATORS IN WORLDWIDE CONFERENCE**

A school administrator described the challenges she faces on her job: high workload, a lack of resources, and not enough time to work with struggling teachers.

Sound familiar? These are some of the difficulties many principals and vice principals must come to grips with each day in Maryland. The difference was that the administrator talking was checking in from Uganda, part of a unique multinational videoconference sponsored by the World Bank on April 16.

The International Forum for School Leaders conference brought together administrators from the United Kingdom, Ghana, and Sri Lanka, as well as Uganda and Maryland. Co-developed by the Maryland State Department of Education and the Training Group of the British Council, the World Bank event focused not only on common difficulties, but also on ideas and solutions.

Nine principals from Maryland represented the U.S. contingent. Their thoughts and ideas were beamed from the World Bank studios in Washington, DC, to remote sites around the world.

Maryland participants were Jay Berno, Walkersville High School, Frederick County; Sherri-Le Bream, Winters Mill High School, Carroll County; Christine Handy, Colonel Richardson High School, Caroline County; Arlen Liverman, Old Mill High School, Anne Arundel County; David Bruzga, Long Reach High School, Howard County; Heath Morrison, Thomas Stone High School, Charles County; James Scofield, Northwestern High School, Baltimore City; Wayne Thibeault, Sparrows Point High School, Baltimore County; and Wayne Whigham, Seneca Valley High School, Montgomery County.

Thibeault said that Maryland principals put student learning, student achievement and the development of each student at the top of their agenda, but that competing demands on their time means they must build the capacity for leadership among the teachers they work with.

That is a goal that appears to be shared by educators on a universal basis. Professor Andy Hargreaves, director and professor of the International Centre for Educational Change, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, from a site in Dublin, Ireland, said that international discussions have the potential of bringing people together and building a sense of community for education leaders. "Isolation is the enemy of improvement," he explained.

Hargreaves suggested that administrators set aside time to work directly with students. "Find out how they are learning," he said, noting that administrators can often learn about their school's effectiveness by shadowing a student for a day.

He added that administrators must also ask questions of their teaching staff. "If 35 people are telling you about some problem, denial is no longer an option," he said.

Merril Haeusler, director of the South East England Virtual Education Action Zone, agreed that a running dialogue with teachers is important to an administrator's success. "We are not the only persons with the answers," Haeusler explained. "We must empower teachers to ask the questions."

Whigham found common ground with his English colleague, saying that staff members within each school should be encouraged to take leadership roles. He added that an informal principal's organization in Montgomery County has proven to be an excellent support system for new and experienced leaders alike. "We agree to meet one day per month, all day, with our cell phones turned off," he explained. "It goes beyond gripes, and we share what is learned. A mentoring program is developed."

The administrators at the World Bank conference spent a fast two hours in a global conversation, exchanging ideas and discussing problems. In the end, participants agreed that it was a rewarding experience. Following the session, World Bank officials set in place preliminary follow-up plans involving a Web site and a listserv designed to continue the conversation. Mary Cary, Assistant State Superintendent for Professional and Strategic Development, who developed the idea for the partnership along with Jim Foran, MSDE's Director of High School and Postsecondary Initiatives, and World Bank officials, said such follow-up is critical for the success of the experiment.

"One of the things I hope doesn't happen is that once the teleconference is over we'll have a few on-line e-mail conversations and that will be that," she said.

**(more)**

## **MARYLAND PRINCIPALS LINK WITH EDUCATORS WORLDWIDE (Cont.)**

It does not appear likely that the World Bank will let the momentum slide. "We are looking to expand the project in the new fiscal year," said David Harding, senior education specialist with the World Bank Institute.

Following the teleconference, Harding suggested that another teleconference might be set up several months down the road to help chart progress or add nations to the network that has been banded together.

David Sanders, principal of the Colombo International School in Sri Lanka, noted that there is much that principals can learn from one another.

"It has been very reassuring for us to hear the same questions and problems in other nations," Sanders said. "All of us here feel the principal must be very involved with his or her school. Every one in the school is involved with the staff development process."

Professor Hargreaves said the importance of collaboration is clear to him. "We have an old saying: 'A trouble shared is a trouble halved,'" he noted.

## **TOURISM INDUSTRY REACHES OUT TO MARYLAND SCHOOLS IN NEW GUIDE**

In response to the new challenges involved with marketing to student groups since September 11 and in cooperation with local tourism offices, Maryland's Office of Tourism Development, an agency of the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development, has published a guide aimed at school principals, teachers, and student group leaders.

The *Maryland Field Trip Guide* lists attractions and educational activities that welcome student groups and identifies those sites and activities according to curriculum. Teachers and group leaders can select their particular subject -- science, social studies or visual arts, for example -- and immediately find appropriate field-trip venues. In addition to descriptions of each location or experience, the guide indicates the grade levels that would be interested in the opportunity, the size of the groups they can accept, fees involved and whether or not resource materials are available.

"The tragic events of September 11 resulted in a sharp decline in student field trips, causing many students to miss out on learning opportunities and many educational destinations to miss out on some of their best visitors," said Governor Parris N. Glendening. "This guide will encourage educators to resume these important trips and enhance learning both outside and within the classroom."

"Field trips are an excellent way to bring the lessons of the classroom to life," said Lt. Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Chair of the Governor's Cabinet Council on Business, Economic Development and Transportation. "The *Maryland Field Trip Guide* gives educators an important resource as they help students explore our State and unlock the many one of a kind historical and cultural treasures Maryland has to offer."

In addition to the curriculum-based opportunities, the guide also outlines performance venues that welcome bands, choirs and other groups. A third section of the guide offers selected itineraries that are commercially available, so group leaders can book a ready-made trip directly with a tour operator. Again, these itineraries reference the curriculum and grade levels for which they are considered most appropriate.

The final section of the guide provides a list of Maryland tour operators who can work with schools organizing these trips.

The guide will be mailed to the principals of all Maryland schools and to tour operators who have expressed an interest in working with student groups. The state's tourism industry anticipates that field trips will pick up during the spring term; therefore, teachers will need an easy-to-use and quickly accessible resource in order to determine their options.

"Field trips provide wonderful learning opportunities for students and give them a chance to see and experience first-hand what they are learning in the classroom," said State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick. "The *Maryland Field Trip Guide* will be a very valuable tool for teachers as they look for ways to reinforce their lessons and extend their students' learning beyond the classroom walls."

For more information about this program or to order a *Maryland Field Trip Guide*, educators and group leaders can call Sandy Stilling at 410-767-6270.

An electronic version of the guide is posted on Maryland's tourism Web site. The direct link is:

[www.mdifun.org/travel/brochure.asp](http://www.mdifun.org/travel/brochure.asp). ■

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